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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------091206 131909Z /47
O R 131613Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5997
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAGUA 1193

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PFOR, NU
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA: MARCH 9

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA INVITED AMBASSADOR TO LUNCH MARCH 9. THE CONVERSATION TURNED ON AMBASSADOR'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON FOR COM CONFERENCE AND CONVERSATIONS THERE, THE CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE, AND CURRENT INITIATIVES OF SOMOZA. SOMOZA APPEARED DISTRAUGHT WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN RELATED TO NEWS OF ASSASSINATION OF ONE OF HIS TOP GENERALS ON THE SAME DAY. END SUMMARY

1. ON MARCH 9 PRESIDENT SOMOZA INVITED AMBASSADOR TO LUNCH WHICH LASTED TWO HOURS. SOMOZA APPEARED SOMEWHAT DISTRAUGHT AND DEFENSIVE. SOMOZA ASKED AMBASSADOR ABOUT HIS TRIP TO WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED HIS CONVERSATIONS ON POLICY ISSUES REGARDING OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. HE DESCRIBED OUR DESIRE TO RENEGOTIATE THE USE OF US FUNDS IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO MEET THE TERMINAL DISBURSEMENT DATE. SOMZA REQUESTED THE AMBASSADOR TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH FINANCE MINISTER GENIE RIGHT AWAY. AMBASSADOR ADVISED SOMOZA THAT MILGP WOULD BE MOVED INTO THE EMBASSY. SOMOZA WAS
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CLEARLY UPSET. HE SAID WE SHOULD STUDY THE AGREEMENT. AMBASSADOR SAID WE WOULD STUDY THE AGREEMENT. HE THEN ASKED IT IT WERE POSSIBLE THAT SOMOZA MIGHT INVITE A BRAZILIAN MILITARY MISSION TO NICARAGUA. SOMOZA APPEARED TO DISMISS THIS POSSIBILITY.

2. SOMOZA SAID HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE WERE MOVING THE MILGP; IT WOULD JUST ENCOURAGE THE OPPOSITION. SMOZA SAID THAT JUST

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ONE WORD FROM US WOULD BE ENOUGH TO QUIET THE OPPOSITION. THE OPPOSITION, HE SAID, GOT ITS CURRENT STRENGTH FROM SIGNALS IT WAS RECEIVING FROM WASHINGTON. THAT IS WHAT HAS CAUSED THE DISTURBANCES. SOMOZA SAID PAST REBELLIONS WERE MADE IN NICARAGUA ADN, THEREFORE, THEY WERE MORE PEACEFULLY HANDLED. BUT NOW THIS IS A REBELLION ENCOURAGED BY FUNCTIONARIES IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID AID HAD BEEN CUT OFF FOR OVER A YEAR. HOW LONG WOULD THIS GO ON. THE GON HAS BEEN TRYING TO BE ACCOMMODATING BUT THE PROBLEM IS THE OPPOSITION DOESN'T WANT TO DIALOGUE. SOMOZA REFERRED TO A DOCUMENT OF THE TWELVE SIGNERS OF THE COMMUNIQUE CALLING FOR SOMOZA'S RESIGNATION IN WHICH THEY REFER TO CONFISCATING SOMOZA'S PROPERTIES. HE SAID THEY WANT HIS SURRENDER, NOT TO CREATE A DEMOCRACY AND A NATION WITH PEACE. SOMOZA EXPRESSED PESSIMISM AS TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT NICARAGUANS WILL LEARN TO BEHAVE DEMOCRATICALLY, CAPABLE OF COMPROMISE.

3. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THERE IS A GLOBAL TRENT TOWARD LESS U.S. DIRECT AID, ESPECIALLY FOR MIDDLE-LEVEL COUNTRIES SUCH AS NICARAGUA. HE SAID RE MILITARY ASSISTANCE THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY TO BE FORTHCOMING, ESPECIALLY LETHAL WEAPONS OR SUPPLIES, UNTIL A PEACEFUL SITUATION WERE RESTORED HERE. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT, BECAUSE OF THE CURRENTLY POLARIZED SITUATION, TWO AID LOANS WERE BEING DEFERRED SO AS TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE THAT THE U.S. WERE TAING SIDES. HE CONTINUED BY SAYING SOMOZA SHOULDN'T BE DISCOURAGED: HE SHOULD CONTINUE EFFORTS TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION EVEN IF THE OPPOSITION REJECTED HIS EFFORTS TO GET THEM TO PARTICIPATE. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT SOMOZA SHOULD TAKE ACTION TO FORM THE NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT WAS ONE OF THE THINGS HE WOULD ANNOUNCE IN HIS MARCH 10 PRESS CONFERENCE. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THIS WAS A VERY IMPORTANT MOVE AND THAT IT WAS A SHAME THE IAPA HAD NOT ACCEPTED THE GON'S OFFER TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO STUDY THE INVESTIGATION. SOMOZA ASKED WHETHER AMBASSADOR THOUGHT THE U.S. COULD ACT FAVORABLE TO AN EXTRADITION REQUEST. AMBASSADOR SAID IT WOULD DEPEND ON A JUDICIAL DECISION AND A POSITIVE RESPONSE MIGHT BE DIFFICULT BUT THAT HE THOUGH THE POSSIBILITY TO BE OPEN UNDER THE EXTRADITION TREATY WHICH WAS STILL IN FORCE.

4. SOMOZA ASKED IF HE COULD INTERPRET THE MOVE OF THE HONDURAN MILITARY AGAINST THE FSLN GUERRILLAS USING HONDURAS AS A SAFEHAVEN AS RESULTING FROM PRESSURE FROM THE U.S. HE WONDERED IF THIS WERE A SIGN OF APPROVAL FOR THE INITIATIVES HE HAS TAKEN. AMBASSADOR SAID HE DID NOT KNOW. HOWEVER, HE COMMENTED, SOMOZA'S SPEECH WAS VERY POSITIVE. SOMOZA SAID THE SPEECH HAD BEEN DIFFICULT TO PREPARE: WHEN HIS FRIENDS AND ADVISERS HAD LEARNED HE PLANNED TO ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION TO LEAVE THE NATIONAL GUARD THEY WERE SHOCKED AND URGED HIM NOT TO SAY THAT. AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THERE HAD BEEN SOME PARTS OF THE SPEECH WHICH WERE NOT VERY CONCILIATORY, SUCH AS THE REFERENCE TO HOUSEWIVES WHO HAD BEEN CONDUCTING A "POTS AND PANS" CAMPAIGN

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NOW SUCCEDDING IN OBTAINING BETTER BENEFITS FOR THEIR DOMESTIC EMPLOYEES. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT THEY DESERVED IT.

5. AMBASSADOR ASKED IF SOMOZA HAD HAD CONTACTS WITH DIFFERENT SECTORS SUCH AS THE CHURCH. SOMOZA SAID HE HAD CALLED THE PAPAL NUNCIO AND ASKED HIM TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS FOR HIM WITH THE BISHOPS BUT THAT NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. HE SAID SEVERAL OF THE LEADING POLITICAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS WERE COMPLETELY INTRANSIGENT. HE SAID THE OPPOSITION IS FRAGMENTED AND CONTACTS WITH THEM WERE DIFFICULT. SOMOZA INDICATED HE WOULD LIKE US TO MEDIATE. AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH ALL GROUPS AND COUNSEL MODERATION BUT NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN IMPOSING ANY U.S. SOLUTION.

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6. SOMOZA COMPLAINED ABOUT THE PRESSURE ON HIM FROM THE U.S. HE SAID HE HAD FRIENDS IN THE U.S. AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS; THAT HE SHARED THE SAME IDEOLOGY AS THE U.S.; THE EDUCATION OF HIS FAMILY FROM HIS GRANDFATHER (IN PHILADELPHIA) ON DOWN WAS IN THE U.S. SOMOZA CONTINUED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS HAD NOT HAD A SINGLE TRIUMPH AROUND THE WORLD AND SO NOW THEY WERE AFTER HIS HEAD. BUT, HE SAID, HE HAS THE SOLID BACKING OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE GN. HE DESCRIBED VARIOUS SCENARIOS THAT HIS OPPONENTS THOUGHT MIGHT WORK. THERE COULD BE A PUSH FOR OAS INTERVENTION AS IN THE DOMINCAN REPUBLIC. THERE COULD BE A REBELLION IN THE LIBERAL PARTY OR THE GN. HE SAID ONE OF THESE WERE VERYLIKELY. HE SAID HE IS NOT CONVINCED THE OPPOSITION REPRESENTS A MAJORITY: THEY ARE A MINORITY.

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7. SOMOZA SAID THE OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE SHOW THAT DEMOCRACY DOESN'T WORK. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THE U.S. ALSO IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE VIOLENCE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED SOMOZA HOW HE WOULD DEAL WITH THE VIOLENCE. SOMOZA REPLIED HE WAS GOING TO BE MUCH FIRMER; HE WOULD APPLY "MAS MANO DURA". AMBASSADOR SAID HE HOPED SOMOZA WOULD AVOID EXCESSES. THE U.S. RECOGNIZED THE LEGITIMATE RIGHT OF THE GN TO
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SELF-DEFENSE AND TO MAINTAIN ORDER BUT THAT DID NOT INCLUDE TORTURE OR OTHER EXCESSES. IF THAT HAPPENED IT WOULD BE TERRIBLE. THE PRESIDENT AGREED.

8. AMBASSADOR ASKED SOMOZA WHETHER HE COULD CONSIDER MOVING UP THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.SOMOZA SAID HE WOULDN'T RULE THAT OUT BUT THAT HE BELIEVED NOTHING WOULD OVERCOME THE INTRANSIGENCE OF THE OPPOSITION.

9. SOMOZA AGAIN INDICATED HE IS VERY UNHAPPY WITH U.S. POLICY. HE SAID HE IS LOSING PATIENCE. HE ASKED HOW LONG HE COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE BEATEN WITH STICK WITH NO RECOGNITION FOR HIS INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS. SOMOZA SAID THE POINT COULD COME WHEN HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER ASKING THE PEACE CORPS AND OTHER ELEMENTS TO LEAVE AND FIND OTHERS TO DEAL WITH. HE SAID HE BELIEVED IN DEMOCRACY CHANGE IN NICARAGUA AND IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF THAT WERE NOT POSSIBLE.

10. COMMENT: THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THIS MEETING WAS SOMOZA'S APPARENT DEFENSIVENESS. PART OF THIS ATTITUDE COULD RESULT FROM THE EXECUTION ON THE PREVIOUS DAY OF GENERAL PEREZ VEGA BY GUERRILLAS. HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO LIKELY HE IS GENUINELY FRUSTRATED BY HIS APPARENT INABILITY TO GET ANY ACCOMMODATING RESPONSE FROM HIS OPPONENTS NOW THAT HE HAS LAUNCHED WHAT HE BELIEVES ARE CONCILIATORY INITIATIVES. THE OPPOSITION, OF COURSE, FEELS THAT IT HAS BEEN DECEIVED SO MANY TIMES BY THE SOMOZAS IN THE PAST THAT IT IS NOT ABOUT TO GRASP EAGERLY AT THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVES. SOMOZA IS ALSO FRUSTRATED BY WHAT HE FEELS IS A CONTINUING COOLNESS TOWARD HIM ON THE PART OF THE USG.
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